

CITY OF LEWISTON

CITY COUNCIL

AUGUST 26, 2026

SPECIAL MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL ROOM AT 6:00 P.M.

THE HONORABLE CARL L. SHELINE, MAYOR, PRESIDING.

PRESENT: Mayor Sheline, Councilors Nagine, Harriman, and Chittim, City Administrator Bryan Kaenrath and Deputy City Administrator Brian O'Malley. Absent/Excused: Councilors Longchamps, Roy, Noble, and Martel. Note – Per the City Charter, the Mayor is permitted to cast a vote in the absence of a City Councilor.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

PUBLIC HEARING AND FINAL PASSAGE FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE MORATORIUM ORDINANCE REGARDING RENT INCREASES FOR LOTS IN MOBILE HOME PARKS

Mayor Sheline opened the public hearing to receive citizen input and comment.

Bret Martel, Ward 7 – This is not just an issue of a lot rent moratorium but a failure of Lewiston government to provide transparency, leadership, and accountability. Asked last evening after the special meeting if the City Attorney and Housing Committee chair would be present to address questions and no response was provided. When shootings were occurring in city, asked for an agenda item to address and was denied because it was submitted a day late. Why is this issue now an urgent matter with a special meeting? A five-year member of the Housing Committee resigned citing concerns with lack of transparency and accountability.

Andrew Jones, Ward 2 – Concerns with process that has taken place. This is the third attempt at this issue but we are not addressing pressing issues such as gun violence. If City Attorney recommended this meeting, he could be here to explain why. The Council is the client and has the authority to release the information. Several Councilors are not here; one choosing not to participate and is sitting in audience in protest.

Eric Fleishman, Lewiston – Thank you for the special meeting. Good to see people taking this matter seriously. This is an urgent matter to address now because of the potential time gap between the expiration of the current moratorium and adoption of the ordinance regulating lot rents. During that time, rents could increase substantially knowing they will be controlled later. Several parks raised their lot rents when the state discussed the idea of controlling lot rents. Parks raised the rents in anticipation of that passing, even though it did not pass, the lot rent amounts did not decrease, some went up \$150 a month. Some residents are facing the choice of rents vs food or rents vs health insurance. It is essential for the city to regulate increases in order to control homelessness.

Valerie Jackson, Ward 6 – Fox Run Mobile Home Park resident. When Beauvita bought park, implemented a 10% lot rent increase. Her monthly rent went from \$500 to \$550 a month. New residents are \$600 a month. She pays for snow removal and lawn maintenance which is about \$200 a month. She also pays for water and sewer to the park owners. Her mortgage costs are on

top of these expenses. The potential time gap between the moratorium and new ordinance creates too much exposure for time to have rents increase. Lots of retirees live in mobile home parks, cannot increase income, a vulnerable population that could become homeless if rents increase too much. Please extend moratorium.

Kathy Wing, Fox Run mobile home park resident – With new state law, expecting an annual lot increase of \$100 a year. She and husband work part time after retiring so they can afford expenses. Understanding is that the lot rent ordinance will be presented in September. Please pass to help prevent corporate landlords from hurting tenants.

Louise Martel, Ward 6 – Fox Run Mobile Park, 30-year resident. Last night, the regional manager of the company that owns the park said the basic lot rents are \$420 but this is untrue. She as a thirty-year tenant pays \$550 a month, and new residents pay \$600 a month. Lot renters have no control or say in operations. Please support moratorium.

Danielle Fournier, Ward 6 – Resident of Fox Run Mobile Park, residents live on fixed income. Listened last night to business owners cannot afford to operate the parks if the lot rents are controlled by ordinance, the owners tried to equate their issues of balancing their business expenses with the same issues that tenants face balancing their costs. In the first half of 2021, the lot rent was \$365 a month; in the last half of the year, it was increased to \$385. As of July 2022, it increased to \$405. In July 2023, it went up to \$450 and in July 2024, it went to \$500. Beauvita purchased the park then and increased the rents to \$550. New residents have to pay \$600 but no new services have been added, so this is just corporate greed. If moratorium was not in effect, the rent in July 2026 would probably have increased to \$600. This all reflects a 78% increase in 5 years, with an average of 15.6% a year and that is unsustainable. Please extend moratorium.

John Gerry, Ward 6 – Resident of Fox Run, at last night's meeting, struck by the many comments that there was no proof offered that the park owners have been acting in a predatory manner. It was noted last night that the rents in the parks owned by Beauvita have only gone up \$37 since 2004. This is not true, within weeks of purchasing the park, they raised the rents \$50 a month. Park representatives last night stated they need to raise rents to cover expenses in their other parks, it is not fair for the tenants of one park to have to pay a higher lot rent for improvements at another park. Please extend the moratorium.

Laurie Horton, Ward 2 – Last night's vote showed you chose not to trust park owners. The special meetings do not demonstrate transparency; there are two meetings in September before the moratorium expires and it could have been handled then. Why wasn't it noticed before that the lot rent ordinance would not be ready in time and allow for the moratorium extension vote to occur at a regular meeting. The state laws allow one increase a year. Owners of the parks are not in business for subsidized housing; these businesses are for profit. The lot rent stabilization ordinance will make people homeless.

John Horton, Ward 2 – It is clear that no data will change the minds of Councilors, the data shows this ordinance is not needed but the Council is choosing to not listen to the data. This meeting was called with very short notice, heard about it from one of his tenants. Statements that rents could triple without the lot rent ordinance are ridiculous. He has been very open, showed his company expenses to the Housing Committee so they can see the costs of operations, has been open to make sure that everything is open and fair. Has attended every Housing Committee

meeting. The language in the moratorium ordinance is incorrect – eight out of the fourteen Whereas Claus statements have been proven to be false or not realistic at all. This issue is not building trust in the community.

Chris Saroie, Ward 1 – There is a perception that landlords are rich and greedy and unethical in their practices, and that is very offensive and untrue for some of us. The lot rents at Sunset Gardens Mobile Home Parks are \$386 a month, including water and sewer. We have been fair and responsible park owners. With comments from the Council, such as “rents could triple if the moratorium lapses,” shows the Council does not trust park owners. What business owner would want to conduct business in Lewiston with that type of attitude and lack of trust from the Council?

The Mayor then closed the hearing.

Councilor Harriman announced that Councilor Noble had a prior commitment tonight and could not attend.

VOTE (1)

Motion by Councilor Chittim, seconded by Councilor Harriman:

That the proposed Moratorium Ordinance regarding Rent Increases for Lots in Mobile Home Parks, to be effective September 29, 2026, receive final passage by a roll call vote.

Passed - Vote 4-0

VOTE (2)

Motion by Councilor Chittim, seconded by Councilor Nagine:

To adjourn at 6:36 P.M. Passed - Vote 4-0

A true record, Attest:

Brian T. O'Malley
Deputy City Administrator
Lewiston, Maine